

History of Boulder

Human occupation of the Boulder Valley began long before the first European settlers arrived. The Boulder Valley was originally home to groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers. Some 10,000 years ago people were living and prospering here and their artifacts, campsites, and villages are still found throughout Boulder County today. Archaeological excavations conducted by the Colorado Archaeological Society at the Rock Creek Ranch Open Space uncovered a series of pit houses that date back to about 500 to 2,000 years ago. At the lowest level of the excavation a fire hearth was discovered, and it contained a Folsom spear point. Folsom points were made by ancient big game hunters and they date to about 10,000 to 10,500 years ago.

Further archaeological investigations in Boulder County have confirmed that many people lived and traveled through the Boulder Valley prior to European Arrivals. In the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area excavations found stone walls, built by humans, are aligned as drive lines used to hunt and trap bighorn sheep. These walls were constructed some 500 to 2,000 years ago, and used continually during those times. The hunters who built these drive lines did not live permanently near the hunting area, as it is located at an elevation of 10,000 feet above sea level. They traveled up Boulder Canyon to hunt bighorn sheep and other animals, and then back down the canyon in the fall season. They wintered in rock shelters along the foothills of Boulder Valley. Arrowheads and pottery that these people left behind have been found in the Indian Peaks Wilderness, Boulder Canyon, on Marshall Mesa, at Rock Creek Ranch, and at all of the City and County's open space properties. Later the Native Americans that we call the Southern Arapaho, Ute, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Sioux inhabited and traveled through the Boulder Valley.

The first European settlers came to Boulder during the Pikes Peak Gold rush in 1858. These settlers established a permanent settlement at the head of Boulder Canyon near Red Rocks. In 1859 the first discovery of gold in Boulder County occurred at Gold Run (Gold Hill); soon after that discovery on 10 February 1859, the Boulder City Town Company was formed.

By 1860 Boulder had begun its long association with education by building the first school house in Colorado, on the corner of 14th Street and Front Street (Walnut) this was the first in all of Colorado built strictly for educational purposes. The first frame house was built in Boulder in 1860 as well (by Andrew J. Macky) and was located on the Northeast corner of 14th Street and Pearl.

In 1861 Colorado became a Territory, prior to that Colorado was part of the Nebraska Territory. Boulder County was formed the following year in 1862.



School house on Baseline Road about 1880, above the door is painted School District 10, 1876.



A blast furnace was built near Marshal Mesa in 1864. Joseph Marshall used the furnace along with locally available coal and hematite to produce pig iron, used to make farm implements and horseshoes. The next year the town of Valmont was formed east of Boulder City and quickly became a rival. Both Boulder and Valmont grew to the same size and equally attracted commercial enterprises. In fact Boulder County's first newspaper was the Valmont Bulletin and began publishing on 1 January 1866.

Boulder City residents in 1867 got

the editor of the Valmont Bulletin to move his newspaper from Valmont to Boulder. The editor did move the paper to Boulder and renamed it the Boulder Valley News

The Boulder County Fair opened for the first time in Boulder City on 12 October 1869. This was the first county fair ever held in the Colorado Territory. Boulder City was designated as the county seat of Boulder County in 1867, and Boulder City was incorporated in November of 1871. The first Boulder County Courthouse was built in 1883 at the present courthouse site, but later burned down in 1932. The present courthouse was built later in 1934.

1874 saw the building of a railroad from Denver to Boulder; later railroad service was extended to Golden. Railroad tracks were laid from Boulder to Sunset (up Sunshine Canyon to Gold Hill) in 1883 by the Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific Railroad Company, this provided rail service to the mountain communities west of Boulder. The Colorado and Northwestern Railroad built a rail line from Boulder to Ward in 1890, and it was named "The Switzerland Trail of America."

Boulder became the designated site for the University of Colorado in 1874. A group of Boulder citizens began lobbying the territorial government in 1860, to become home to the university. Also in 1874 the Rocky Mountain Museum was opened by Martha Maxwell on Pearl Street. Ms. Maxwell's elaborate taxidermy collection became the centerpiece of the Colorado exhibit at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.

Another education first came to Boulder in 1876, when the first high school graduation was held; the first in the Colorado Territory. Later that year Colorado became a state, the 38th in the Union. The very next year the University of Colorado opened its Boulder Campus. The University also founded the State Preparatory School, because the State of Colorado lacked properly prepared high school graduates for college add missions.

In 1878 Mary Rippon became the first woman professor at the University of Colorado. The first graduating class at the University of Colorado consisted of six students, all graduated in 1882. Another school in Boulder opened that same year, the Pine Street School (Whittier School).

1890 saw the dedication of the new Boulder Train Depot at 14th Street and Water Street (Canyon Boulevard). Also in 1890 the Boulder Camera newspaper was founded, and the next year it became a daily newspaper. The first private education institution was founded in 1892 when the Mount Saint Gertrude Academy opened. The State Preparatory School moved into its own building located at 17th Street and Pearl that same year.

Boulder suffered a 100 year flood in 1894, causing severe damage. Two years later the Colorado Sanitarium opened. The Colorado Sanitarium was a branch of Dr. J. H. Kellogg's Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan. Dr. Kellogg was an advocate of healthy eating habits and usually prescribed his corn flakes as a very healthy meal.

Boulder became the location of the only Chautauqua Auditorium west of the Mississippi River in 1898, opening on the 4th of July that year. Boulder began its acquisition of open space property in 1899, when a request for 1,800 acres of mountain property and watershed was approved by the United States Congress. The very next year the first automobile was seen in Boulder. By 1906 there were 26 registered automobiles in Boulder; they were also known as "mankillers." The first speed limit was established in 1904, when a city ordinance went into effect making it illegal for any vehicle to exceed six miles per hour.



1894 photograph taken at the corner of 18th St. And Water (Canyon), showing the 100 year flood.

The Carnegie Library opened its doors in 1906 at its present location 1125 Pine Street. The Curran Opera House also opened that same year at 1132 Pearl Street. The Temperance movement came to Boulder in 1907 when the City-Town passed an anti-saloon ordinance. Boulder was first incorporated as a City-Town (in 1859), and did not become the City of Boulder until the 1960's. The first run of the Interurban train from Denver to Boulder occurred in 1908.

The year 1909 saw the opening of the Hotel Boulderado, also that year a crusade was held by "Baseball Billy Sunday" billed as the "World's Greatest Evangelist." Later in 1909 the Union Pacific Railroad introduced a self contained forty two passenger rail car on its Denver to Boulder line. This 78 foot long rail car was propelled by a six cylinder gasoline engine, had extra wide seating, oval windows, and even a separate compartment for smokers. Another transportation change occurred in 1911 when the daily stagecoach from Boulder to Nederland was replaced by a Stanley Steamer Motorcar.

The Charles C. Buckingham Family in 1914 donated the land around Boulder Falls to the City of Boulder. The next year William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) visited Boulder to see some old friends. He was in town as part of the Sells-Floto Circus/Buffalo Show (the remnants of his original Wild West Show).

The University of Colorado approved one of the first Reserve Officer Training Corps Programs in the nation in 1917. That same year Boulder began to pave streets when on 11 September concrete was poured at the corner of 18th Street and Pearl. The City of Boulder was quarantined in 1918 when a Spanish influenza epidemic killed 41 people in Nederland.

1919 was the year when the Switzerland Trail train ended service from Boulder to Ward. The Lions Club that year built the shelter house on Flagstaff Mountain and then donated it to the city, beginning a long tradition of providing city park facilities. At the University, expansion continued when the Helms Building was completed in 1921 this was the first of the University buildings built in the now familiar "Tuscan" style (sandstone with red tiled roof). Taxi service was introduced to Boulder the next year by Florence C. Molloy and Mabel N. Mac Leay.

Folsom Stadium at the University of Colorado was completed in 1924 just in time for Homecoming that year. During the year of 1930 a former president of the Women's Temperance Union, who had led the fight to pass Boulder's anti-saloon ordinance back in 1907, was arrested for selling alcohol to University students. Another alcohol related matter occurred in 1933 when "the largest still ever found in Northern Colorado" was discovered in the Gunbarrel area.

Transportation changed in Boulder in 1931 when the last electric street car was taken out of service. Later in 1937 the first traffic signal was installed at the corner of 12th Street (Broadway) and Pearl. Still later, in 1950 transportation changed again when the Denver-Boulder Turnpike opened. The tolls ended on the turnpike in 1967, paying off the debt early. Also in 1967 the passenger train from Denver to Boulder ended service, the last train had arrived at the old downtown train depot back in 1957.

Boulder voters were the first in the nation to approve a tax to purchase and preserve open space in 1967. The same year voters also approved a repeal of the 60 year old anti-saloon ordinance, allowing liquor to be sold in Boulder again. In 1969 Central Park at Canyon and Broadway was declared a health hazard due to the transients living there. Two years later the 55 foot height limit for buildings in the City of Boulder was approved. Later, in 1976, Boulder voters approved a 2% growth limitation also known as the "Danish Plan." The Boulder running race was established in 1979, becoming one of the premier foot races in the United States. The Boulder Kinetics Challenge began in 1980 at the Boulder Reservoir, and continues to this day, becoming a Boulder tradition.

Boulder Valley has seen many changes since humans first came here some 10,000 years ago. Simple hunter gatherers have given way to miners, students, educators, businessmen, and many others over the years. The City of Boulder began as a humble settlement providing supplies to miners, moving on to one of the finest centers of business and education in the State of Colorado and the United States.

Bibliography

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